



ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims
Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum respects the copyright and other intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection and makes good faith efforts to determine the copyright status of each materials. The Museum has a good faith belief that the materials in this collection may be made publicly available. The Museum welcomes additional information about copyright status. If you have additional information or concerns about the copyright ownership of materials in this collection, please contact the Museum's Library by phone at 202-479-8717 or by email at reference@ushmm.org.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<https://archive.org/details/bib292112>

Sue Marxheimer
66 Westrodge Rd
Edmonton, AB T5T 1B4
Canada
e-mail: suemar@telus.net
Phone: (780) 487-4941

Outings With Papa

Part 1 In *Letenski Sadi*

Letenski Sadi is a park in Prague. The part closest to my home is where people were allowed to walk all over the grass. Most of the park is more formal and you can only walk on the paths. Playing on the grass was very important to me. I felt free, close to nature there. I lived on a street with gray, stone apartment buildings, that had no trees, and certainly no gardens. Sometimes, our maid, Gretl took me out to play with other children in the park.

In summer lots of us kids ran, played and chased each other all over the place. We laughed, pushed each other over, and the grown ups didn't care. Some of the children, especially the boys took off the high shoes we all wore, but I was never allowed to do that. I was sometimes angry, but I imagined the cool grass tickling my toes, digging them into the dirt and feeling squishy. Even through my shoes the grass felt spongy, and made me run faster. It smelled heady, fresh, green like hay and sometimes it was dewy and dappled under the huge chestnut trees. I tried to catch the sun spots as they moved in the breeze. I stripped the green part of the leaves from between their veins and end up with their thin skeletons, five on each stem.

The chestnuts felt so smooth and shiny, like silk, especially if I found them with their green spiky shells still on. I had to stomp on them hard to open them, and peel off their fleshy white, soft inside skin. It smelled spicy, but left a bitter taste on my fingers. The chestnuts felt velvety in my hands, except the lighter spots, were like shammy leather. They were large, not quite round and we played marbles with them. Sometimes, when Gretl wasn't looking, I licked them because they smelled so clean

Sue Marxheimer
66 Westridge Rd
Edmonton, AB T5T 1B4
Canada
e-mail: suemar@telus.net

and nutty. They had the smoothest skin I ever tasted and made me giggle, clap my hands and dance happily. I'd collect as many as I could, stuff them in my pocket and take them home. Then Papa or Mama and I made necklaces, bracelets, crowns or little people out of them. That was fun.

There were also lovely soft hills in this park where we could roll down and bury our noses right in the grasses' earthy smell. On the way down we tried to grab daisies for bouquets. They had golden pin-cushion centers and white petals and some were pink at the tips. You had to sniff very hard because they had hardly any scent. Also there was clover. We looked for four leafed ones. Sometimes Gretl found one and took it home. "For good luck", she said. I never discovered any, but one girl found two and gave me one. I was really pleased and tucked it away carefully to take home. Clover had pink flowers like soft round brushes. We picked off the petals and sucked the honey out of the bottoms.

My Papa and I went to *Letenski Sadi* together every Saturday afternoon. Sometimes, in winter we went sledding. Papa took me for special treats, and slid down the hill with me. I liked that best. He held me tight and got the sled to go the right way and not hit other children. When we rolled over, we sputtered and laughed and wiped the fluffy snow off us and then Papa took off up the hill with the sled and I tried to catch him. The wind pricked my face and breathing was hard, but I ran as fast as I could and always caught him. I guess he must have gotten tired, but down we'd go all over again. By the end we both smelled kind of musty because of our wet coats and we looked like snowmen. Then Papa took his camera out of his inside pocket and took pictures. Once another girl's Papa offered to take a photo of both of us, but I think we lost the picture.

I didn't often go to that section of *Letenski Sadi* with Papa in summer. He liked another part of the park better. When we went there we got all dressed up and I wore my best plaid coat and blue hat and white gloves. There were small signs all over the grass that said, "No walking on the grass".

Sue Marxheimer
66 Westridge Rd
Edmonton AB. T5R 2Y9
Canada
e-mail: suemar@telus.net
Phone: (780) 487-4941

Part In that section of it, *Letenski Sadi* overlooked the city and we could see the river and all the bridges over the Vltava River and Venceslas Square. And Papa would tell me all sorts of interesting things, which I never remembered, but I felt very grown up because he talked to me that way. Lots of the time I'd let go of his hand and skip ahead. It was hard for me to walk and talk all the time.

After our walks we'd drive over the bridge and stop at Bergers for *zmrzlenina*. Choosing flavours was a very serious matter and we discussed all the reasons about which was best today. First we'd stand outside and look in the window at all the brightly coloured goodies. Papa usually ended up with white lemon because he liked its nice sour as well as sweet taste, and I nearly always had red, strawberry or cherry, very sweet, and there were always triangle wafers in the tall glasses too. We'd eat it very slowly because it was so icy-cold in our mouths. I sometimes dropped some on my chin or dress and then Papa had to wipe it off, but he never scolded. We made sure that we ate every drop of our ice cream. Then we'd go home. I loved those outings with my Papa.

Sue Marxheimer
66 Westridge Rd
Edmonton AB. T5R 2Y9
Canada
e-mail: suemar@telus.net
Phone: (780) 487-4941

Part 2 On Sheerwater Road

It is a Saturday afternoon again. But we are now living in West Byfleet, Surrey, England. World War II is about to begin. We got here at the end of March. We are put up in a big mansion, called Sheerwater Lodge that has lots of land around it, big gardens and lawns, and at the back, woods. It has been turned into a hostel for refugees from Czechoslovakia, and most of the people staying there came from Saaz, Mama's home town. So she knows them well, but I only remember a few of them. Our life is uncertain, tense and anxious. The grown-ups worry about what will happen to us, and those we left behind. I worry about my Oma and Opa and my cousins in Pilsen.

On this Saturday, my Papa and I are walking down Sheerwater Road. It is a wide avenue, with tall chestnut trees - like the ones in *Letenski Sadi* - which form a canopy over it. There is very little traffic. You can't see the estates on either side because they are sheltered by dense, tall shrubs and long, winding driveways. Most of the people living there didn't know their neighbors, until they met when they came to see if they could help us.

As we walk down the shaded street we hold hands. I feel warm and close, but not as safe as before. Papa walks quite slowly, like an old man, though he is only 39. He tells me no stories now.

He seems full of sorrow and worry and is lost in thought. I look up into his serious face and wait. I'm worried. Shadows from the trees play on his face, and for a while, I enjoy watching them.

"Papa?"

"Yes?"

"Where are Oma and Opa?" He sighs deeply. I guess he also wants to know about them and about my other Oma and his family in Pilsen.

"I expect they are still in Prague."

"But I want to see them."

Sue Marxheimer
66 Westridge Rd
Edmonton AB. T5R 2Y9
Canada
e-mail: suemar@telus.net
Phone: (780) 487-4941

"Some day, I hope, but I don't know when." Why doesn't he know? But I don't ask because I know he is so sad.

I know he wants to help me. He always did. But sometimes, I just don't understand at all. Just feel very puzzled and lonely.

"I can't help you anymore, not here in England. I don't know anything about English schools or anything. You are alone here."

I stop. Catch my breath. Shocked. I look up hard into his face. I see no hope. I feel lost and devastated, and very alone and lonely.

Hand-in-hand, we turn in at the gate, walk slowly down the long, curving driveway, where tall rhododendrons grow on both sides, and enter the house.

I don't look up any more. I feel as if a huge hole has opened between us. It will never close again.

